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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARAMARIBO 000624

SIPDIS

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WHA/CAR FOR JACKIE ROSHOLT, INR FOR BOB CARHART

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CH](#) [NS](#)

SUBJECT: CHINA UNPOPULAR WITH THE SURINAMESE PUBLIC: "DIRTY PEOPLE"

REF: A. PARAMARIBO 165  
[1](#)B. PARAMARIBO 297  
[1](#)C. PARAMARIBO 305  
[1](#)D. PARAMARIBO 315  
[1](#)E. PARAMARIBO 346  
[1](#)F. PARAMARIBO 441  
[1](#)G. PARAMARIBO 460  
[1](#)H. PARAMARIBO 468  
[1](#)I. PARAMARIBO 610

Classified By: PolOff in accordance with E.O. 12958

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The Surinamese public is biased against recent immigrants from China. These "new Chinese" are accused of entering Suriname illegally, and receiving preferential treatment in obtaining residency permits and business licenses. Their economic competition is feared, and viewed by Surinamers as unfair. Racism is one result, and calls for stricter immigration policy are another. The widespread anti-Chinese bias complicates government of Suriname (GOS) efforts to maintain a close political relationship with China. This cable concludes a series (refs) on China and its presence and influence in Suriname in [1](#)2007. END SUMMARY

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"Roll Out the Red Carpet"  
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[1](#)2. (U) According to one local newspaper, twenty to thirty Chinese immigrants enter Suriname on every KLM flight, and at least 10,000 "new Chinese" have entered Suriname since 2000. Such numbers impact this small nation of a half million people, and led one local politician to say Suriname "rolls out the red carpet." Often, the "new Chinese" are on their way to the United States, sometimes via further stops in the Caribbean, and some are trafficked, particularly for labor. Suriname also has an integrated population of ethnic Chinese from the previous century, and many of the critics of the "new Chinese" invasion distinguish between the two groups.

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"Everything Inside of Ten Days"  
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[1](#)3. (U) "The Chinese who come to Suriname have everything inside of ten days. And we who were born here in Suriname and live here can,t even get a property deed," one squatter told a newspaper in defense of her protest. The near universal assumption of the Surinamese public is that the "new Chinese" come by illegal means, aided by corrupt Surinamers and a mixed network of legal and criminal Chinese organizations. Once arrived, the Chinese are accused of

receiving residence and business permits within days or weeks. This draws fire from Surinamers who sometimes wait years for permits. In the words of another squatter: "the Chinese have priority. They've just gotten here, they don't even understand the language, but their papers are already in order."

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Shops Spring Up Like Mushrooms  
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¶4. (U) Chinese shops have mushroomed across the country, by the hundreds in the capital and by ones and twos in tiny interior villages. These shops and the economic pressure they put on Surinamers drives much of the antipathy towards the "new Chinese." Youth in the interior complain of not being able to find work at the shops. In a man-on-the-street interview conducted by a local newspaper, when asked "how's business," one Surinamese shop-owner said, "the Chinese and their cheap salons compete with us, and they're open until twelve at night. And whether they pay taxes is a question." Kenneth Moenne, leader of the opposition in parliament, said, "I have nothing against the Chinese, they are people too. But without regulations they're going to drive our small local entrepreneurs out of the market."

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"Dirty People, With a Dirty Way of Living"  
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¶5. (C) Resultant paranoia and exaggeration among Surinamers is common: one local told EmbOff, "I feel like I'm not in my own country," and an official from Suriname's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Consular Division told EmbOff "they're going

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to outnumber us." The term "Chinese invasion" (ref I) is common. A telephone survey conducted by one Surinamese newspaper found that 61% of those interviewed have a negative perception of the "new Chinese." This easily spills over into overt racism. Parliamentarian Harriet Ramdien cheerfully told EmbOff, "We Surinamers, we don't like the Chinese. They are a dirty people, with a dirty way of living." In response to a rising chorus demanding action, the government has promised a new immigration policy but has not yet delivered.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Public reaction to the Chinese mirrors press reaction (ref I), and is another example of how the government's pro-China politics grate against popular sentiments. A newspaper editorial put it best in writing about one of the coalition parties: "one has to keep in mind that the (party's) constituency suffers grievously from Chinese takeover, in (economic) sectors that, as a rule, are dominated by supporters." Maintaining the uneasy balancing act between its international political commitment to the People's Republic of China and its domestic commitment to resentful constituents will continue to challenge the government of Suriname. END COMMENT  
GENTON